

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-7. (Cancelled)

Claim 8. (New) A drive system for an off-road utility vehicle having at least one rear axle, which can be permanently driven by a drive engine via a speed-change gearbox, and a front axle, which is operatively connected to the rear axle by an axle engagement clutch that is controllable manually for engagement and disengagement; wherein,

engagement of the axle engagement clutch can also be initiated automatically as a function of the engine load; and

automatic engagement of the axle engagement clutch is blocked at an engine load less than a threshold value which is related to a defined fraction of the maximum engine torque of the drive engine.

Claim 9. (New) The drive system according to Claim 8, wherein the defined fraction lies within a value range of between 60% and 90% of the maximum engine torque of the drive engine.

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Claim 10. (New) The drive system according to Claim 9, wherein the defined fraction is approximately 75% of the maximum engine torque of the drive engine.

Claim 11. (New) The drive system according to Claim 8, wherein automatic engagement of the axle engagement clutch is blocked during a predetermined time interval starting from the point at which the threshold value is reached.

Claim 12. (New) The drive system according to Claim 11, wherein automatic engagement of the axle engagement clutch can be overridden manually.

Claim 13. (New) The drive system according to Claim 12, wherein automatic engagement of the axle engagement clutch can be overridden as a function of one of a closed-loop and an open-loop control system influencing the driving state.

Claim 14. (New) The drive system according to Claim 13, wherein engagement of the axle engagement clutch can be also automatically initiated by a parameter which depends on the slip state of the rear axle of the utility vehicle.